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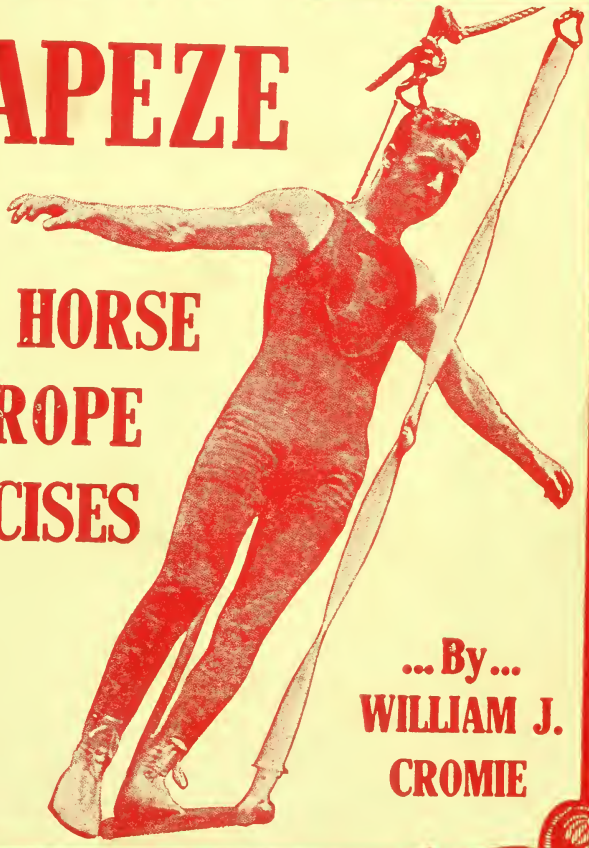

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TRAPEZE LONG HORSE AND ROPE EXERCISES

BY

WILLIAM J. CROMIE

INSTRUCTOR IN GYMNASTICS

UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

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FOREWORD.

THE trapeze is not so popular as in former years, on account of the many accidents that it is accredited to have caused. At one time it constituted the almost universal definition of "gymnastics," but with the years it has been relegated to the circus, and the flying rings have taken its place. Gymnastics have evolved from the circus-performing "stunts," and we now have those exercises which are considered scientific, progressive, pleasing, beneficial and safe, and these have become a necessary and potent part of education.

Recognizing this fact, and realizing that the exercises now in vogue are designed for the masses, we ask the question, "What about the student who is not satisfied with doing the required work in college, club or Y. M. C. A., but who desires to try for a team or practice classical gymnastics?" It is with the thought in mind of assisting the progressive that these books on advanced gymnastics are compiled.

The trapeze has a more dignified place than the ash heap and circus tent, and should be accessible in our gymnasia to those who desire to work upon it. We would not willingly part with the experience gained during lanky boyhood upon the dear old trapeze. It brings fond memories to us as we glance back through the years and see it swinging from a

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rafter in the old barn, in which there was a lot of hay which we used for "sudden stops." Those "possible" and "impossible" stunts certainly illustrated the joys of victory and the crushing sorrows of defeat. And those clinging hay seeds, like the swimmer's wet hair, were telltale marks revealing to anxious parents the nature of our hazardous pastime.

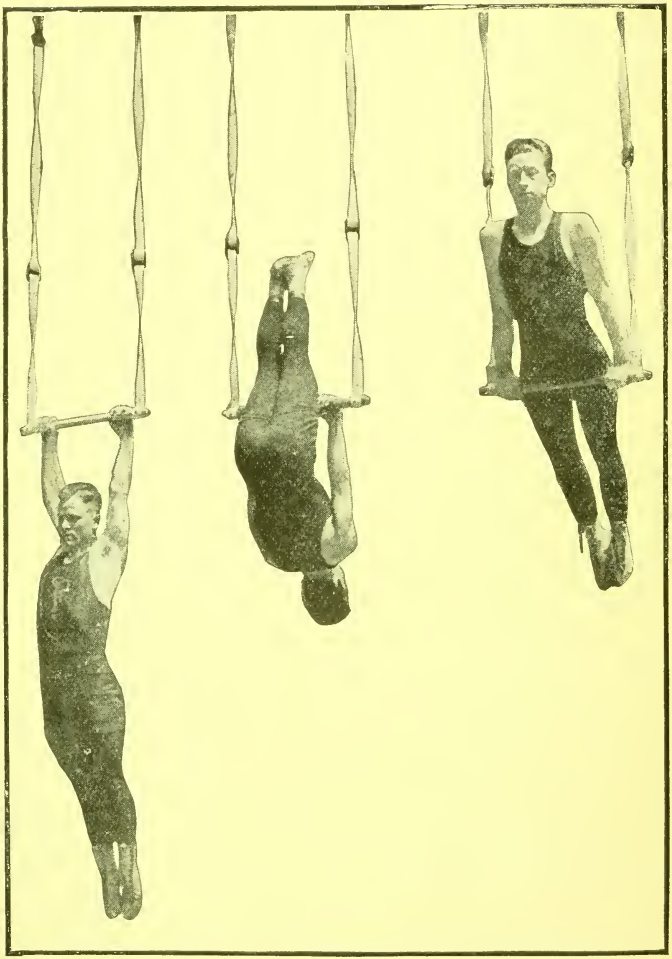
There are still a few barns in the rural districts, and this paper on the trapeze is a plea for "the kids," who gather, not for vicious purposes, but through zest in competitive "stunts" to prove who is "the leader of the gang."

There were numerous accidents during the early days of the trapeze, and this was largely due to the fact that the performer had insufficient training, or else attempted exercises beyond his strength and skill. Every person cannot emulate the great performer Leotard, the inventor of the trapeze, but one can become the master of most of the exercises illustrated in this book by being careful in the difficult movements and by persistent effort.

It is also hoped that there are suggestions herein contained that may prove helpful to members of those great "gangs" of inter-association, club, scholastic and collegiate institutions who are striving not alone to become leaders but champions as well.

All the photographs in this book have been taken by Haeseler, photographer, Philadelphia.

WILLIAM J. CROMIE.



Position 1. Position 2. Position 3.

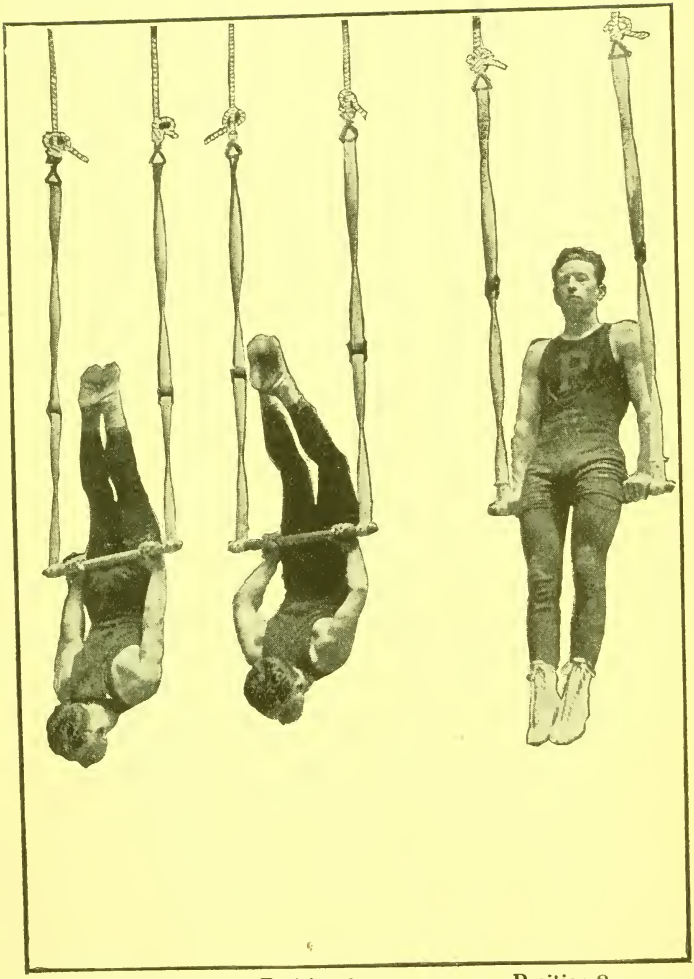
FIGURE 1.

FIGURE 1.

Mount.

Hang as in Position 1, turn over backward, as in Position 2, and circle to front rest (Position 3).

This is an easy way to mount to the front rest. It can also be performed while swinging.



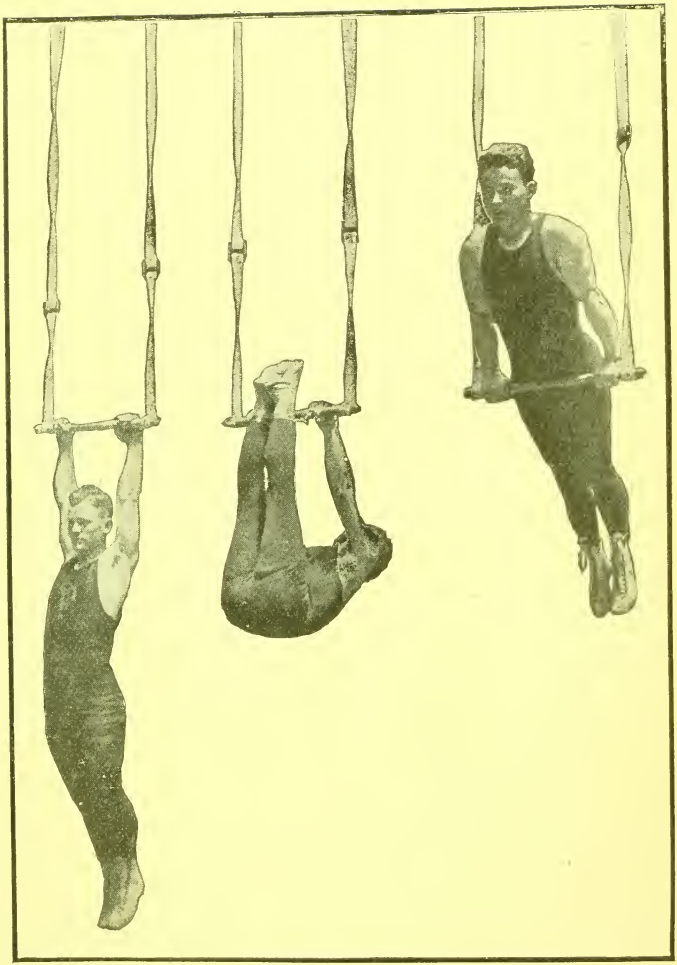
Position 1. Position 2. Position 3.

FIGURE 2.

FIGURE 2.

Mount.

From a back hang, head downward (inverted hang), Position 1, arms straight, pull to Position 2, arms bent, and circle forward to a back rest (Position 3). This exercise can be performed while swinging.



Position 1. Position 2. Position 3.

FIGURE 3.

Figure 3.

Upstart. Mount. Uprise.

From Position 1 flex thighs, knees straight, arms straight (Position 2), upstart to front rest (Position 3).

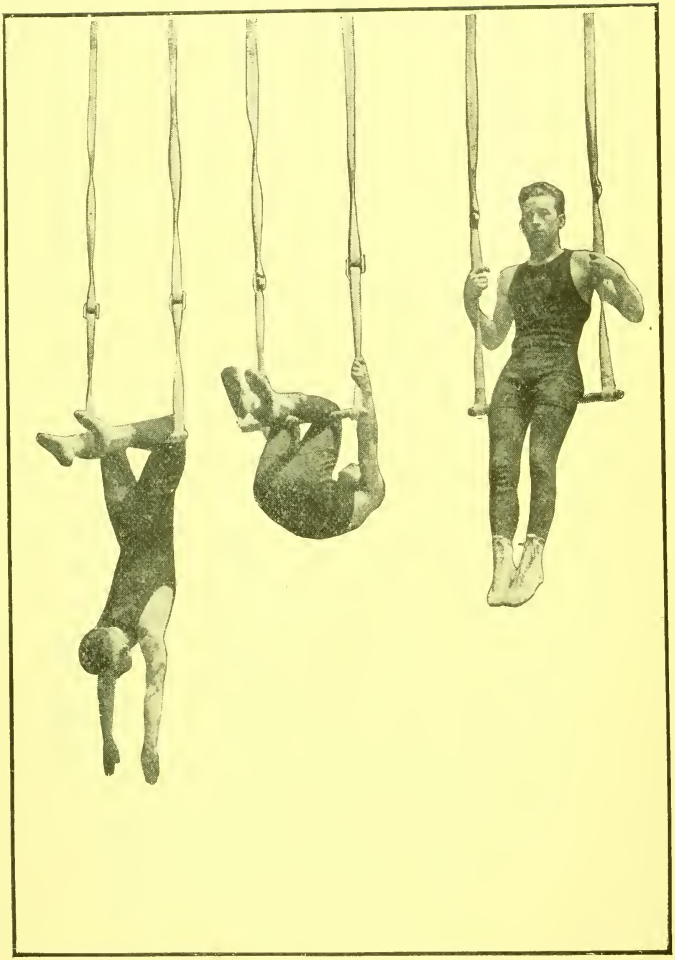
This exercise, although difficult from the stand as in figure, is easy if done at the end of the forward swing.

From Position 2 snap the legs downward sharply, keeping legs and arms straight, and endeavor to "kip" to Position 3.

A drop upstart is begun at Position 3; drop to Position 2, then upstart to Position 3.

At the end of the backward swing from Position 3, drop or swing downward to a hang, and upstart at the end of forward swing.

Swing in Position 1 and, without bending body, uprise at end of backward swing to Position 3.



Position 1. Position 2. Position 3.

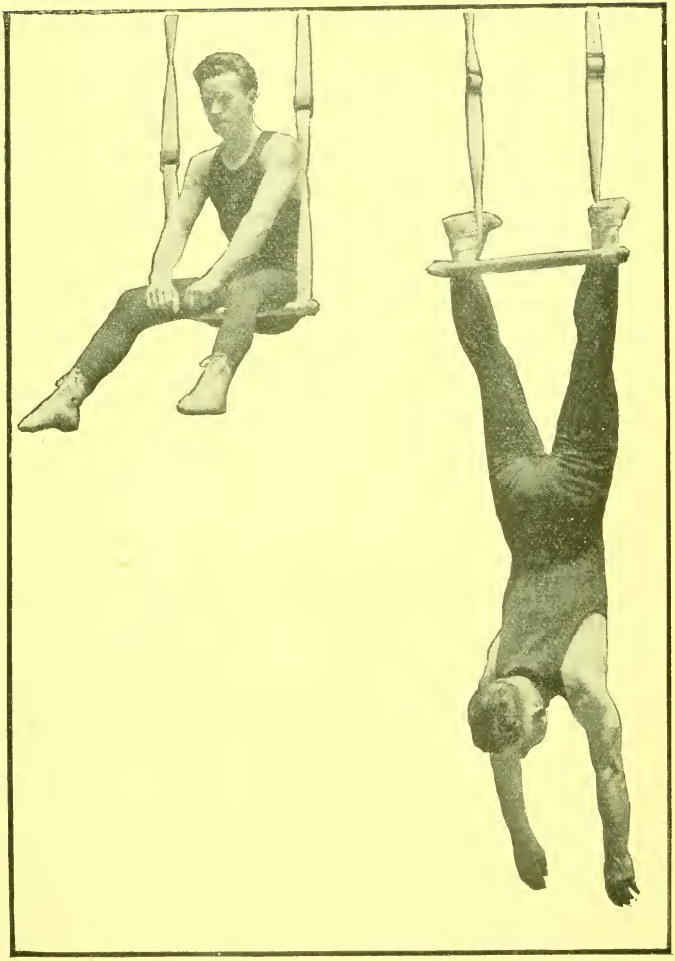
FIGURE 4.

FIGURE 4.

Hanging by Hocks.

From Position 1, hanging by the hocks, swing head and arms back by a jerk; reach forward and grasp ropes or straps as in Position 2; then pull up as in Position 3.

This is a very easy and favorite way of mounting to a sitting position on the trapeze. This is also performed in the swing.



Position 1. Position 2.

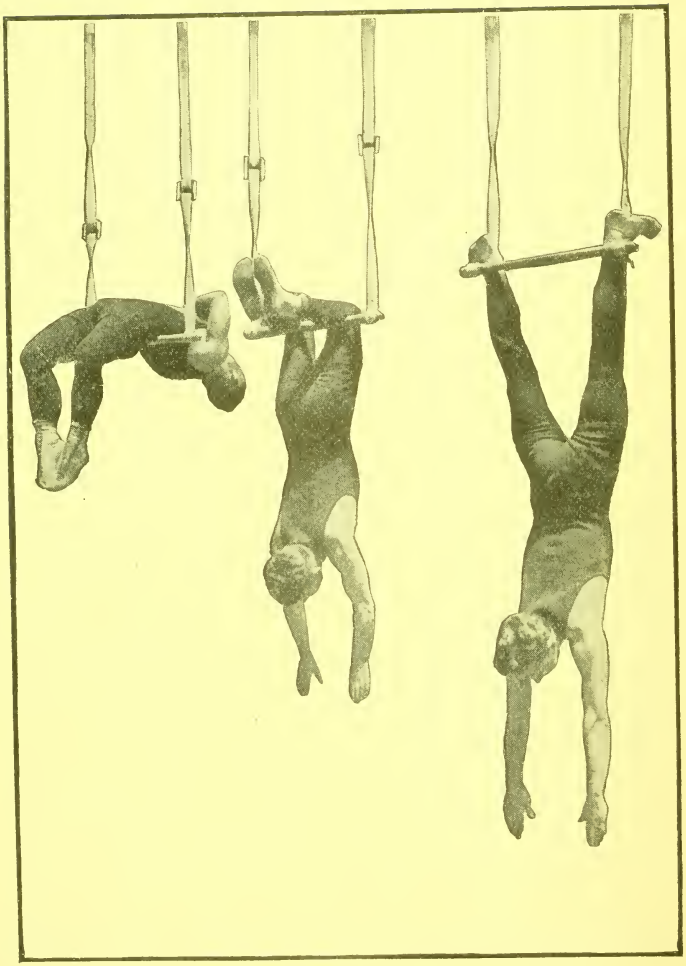
FIGURE 5.

FIGURE 5.

Drop Back to Instep Hang.

Sit upon the bar, resting almost on the hocks (Position 1); lean forward a little, in order to hold balance; then suddenly drop backward to an instep hang (Position 2). To get back to the sitting position, follow directions under Figure 4. Practice stationary, then in swing.

It is quite effective if one drops backward from the sitting position to the instep hang during a big swing.



Position 1. Position 2. Position 3.

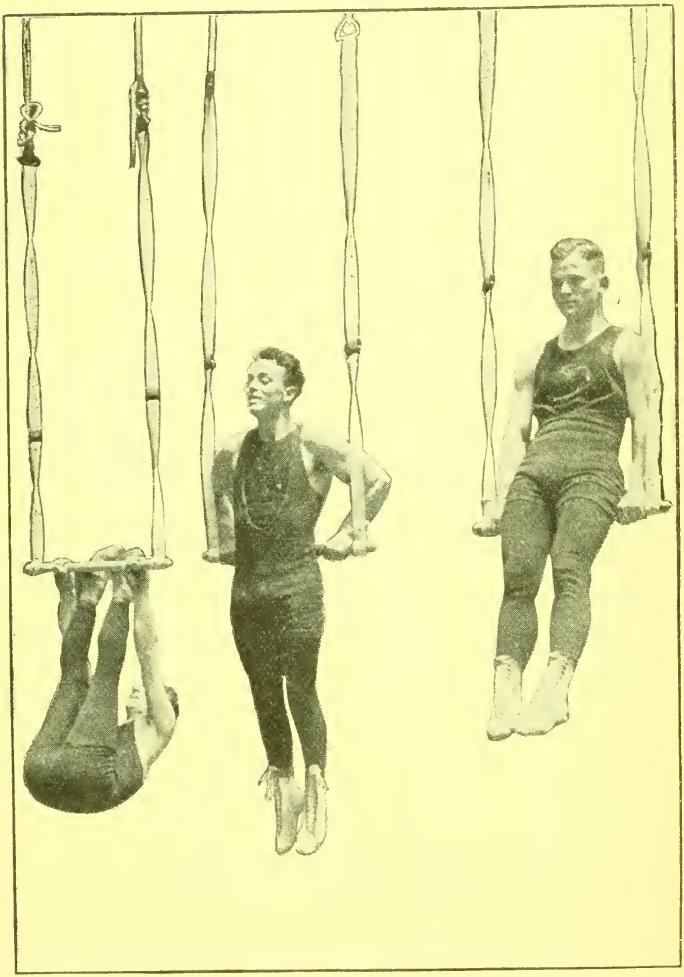
FIGURE 6.

FIGURE 6.

Lie on bar, as in Position 1; drop backward to hock hang, as in Position 2. Lie on buttocks, not on small of back.

Drop backward from Position 1 to Position 2, then to Position 3.

Lie on bar, as in Position 1; drop or slide backward to instep hang, as in Position 3.



Position 1. Position 2. Position 3.

FIGURE 7.

FIGURE 7.

Back Upstart.

The back upstart, or "shifting upstart," is quite difficult, although when performed nicely it appears very simple.

From Position 1, soles of feet underneath the bar, suddenly shoot the feet backwards and upwards, and, while the weight of the body is for the moment off the arms, take advantage of this relief by a quick shifting movement of the hands, bringing the arms up to the front of the bar.

The legs by this time will again have dropped, and if one is quick he will have arrived in Position 2. A slight push and the exercise is completed (Position 3).

It will be found easier to practice this with the reversed grip.

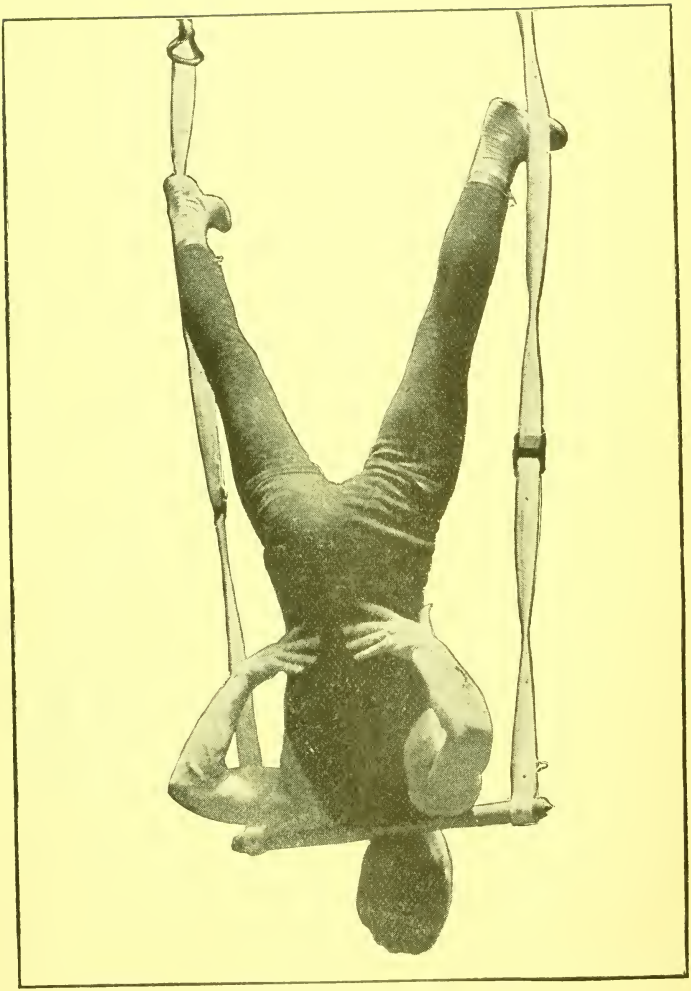


FIGURE 8.

FIGURE 8.

Balance upon Neck.

It is very necessary, in performing upon the trapeze, to be able to balance the body well and in various positions. Figure 8, while not very difficult to accomplish when the trapeze is still, is quite hard to hold the balance during the swing.

The adjustable trapeze is the best, because it can be lowered. When it is near the floor it lessens the danger in balance and other difficult movements, and also helps the performer to master the exercise, as height tends to frighten one.

FIGURE 9.

FIGURE 9.

Balancing Upon One Foot.

To balance as in Figure 9, trapeze stationary, stand on one foot, look at the rope in front, arms at side horizontal and stiff, which serves as a balancing pole. If the free leg is kept stiff it will also assist one in keeping the balance.

In the swing this looks difficult and pretty. Get up a swing by swinging the free leg forward or backward.

The swinging motion can be directed and controlled by the free leg, and as suddenly stopped by a reverse movement.

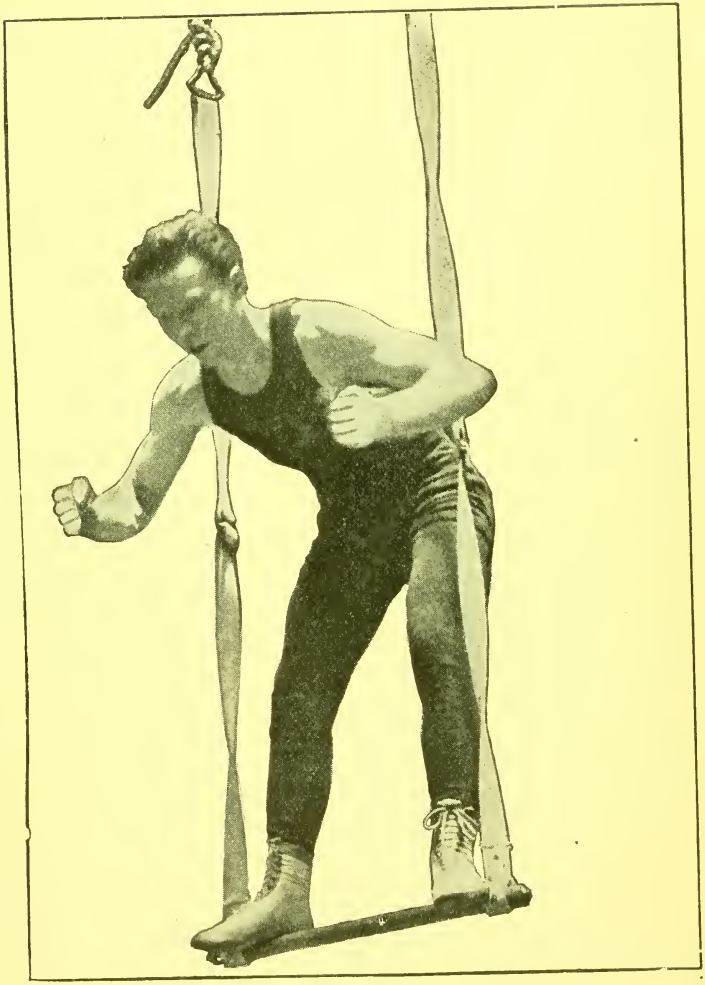


FIGURE 10.

Figure 10.

The Forward Balance.

The forward balance, trapeze stationary, is more difficult than the preceding exercise. Stand as in Figure 10, knees bent slightly; lean forward from waist with arms held front. In case of a tendency to fall, grasp ropes and again get the balance. This is a very graceful exercise when performed during the swing.

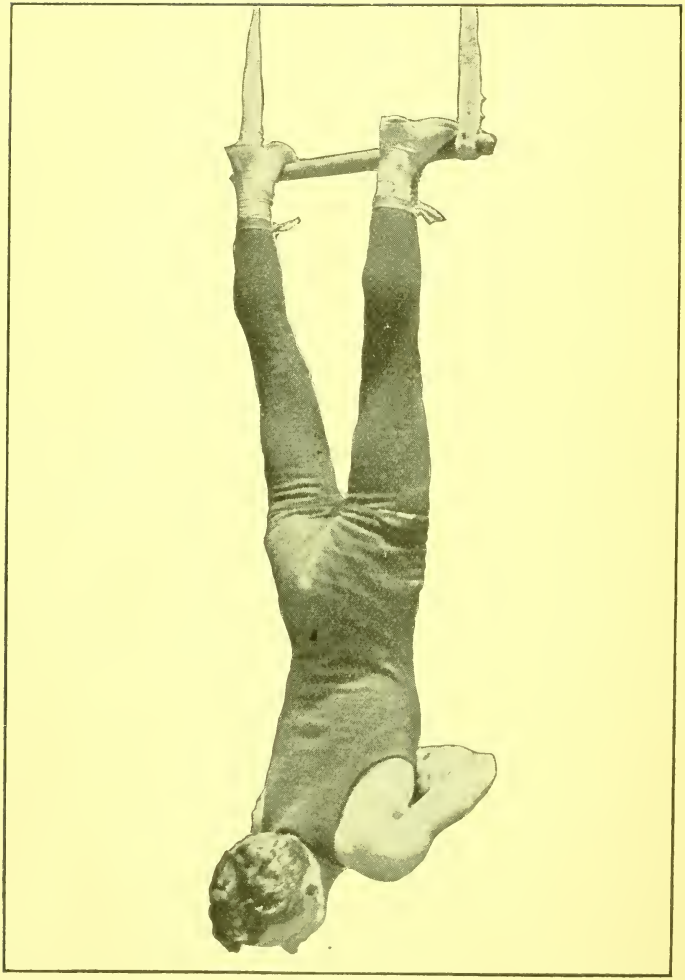


FIGURE 11.

FIGURE 11.

Hanging by Toes.

Grasp trapeze with hands, as in Figure 2, Position 2, raise legs forward and hook toes on bar; release grasp and slowly lower body till in position of figure.

Grasp bar, run and get a swing; repeat the above and hold Figure 13 during the swing. An effective dismount is to double up forward at end of back swing, as if to regrasp bar, release hold with toes, landing upon the feet.

Lungers should be used in learning all dangerous exercises.

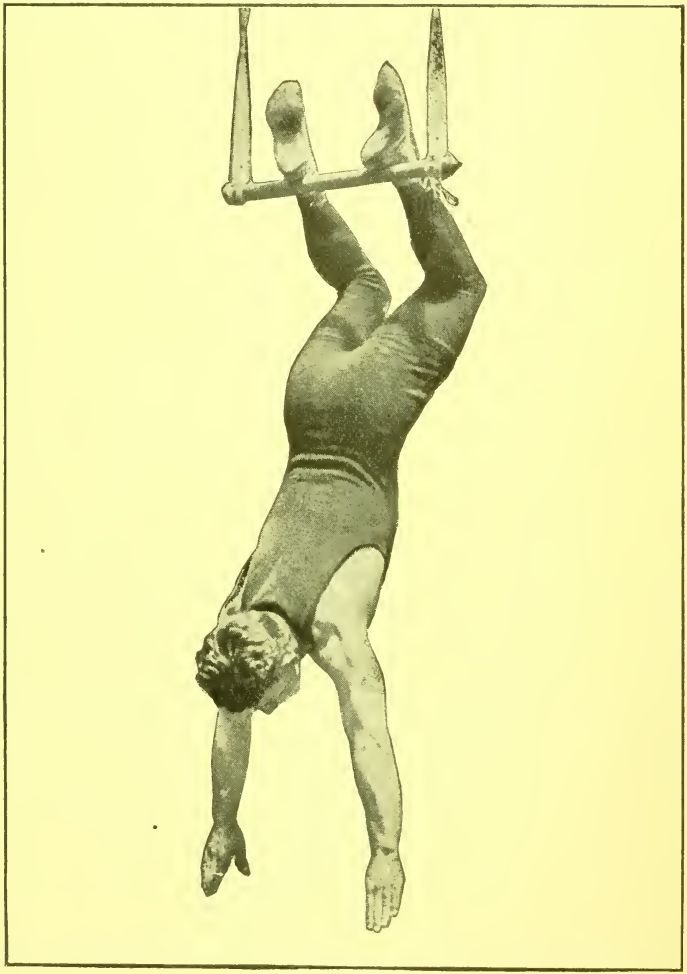


FIGURE 12.

FIGURE 12.

Hanging by Heels.

Grasp the trapeze (Figure 1, Position 1), put feet underneath bar and hook heels upon bar, lower the body slowly as in figure. The tendency to slip off is very great unless the legs are well bent at the knees.

In the swing, hold tight with heels, and at end of front swing endeavor to raise body backward; release hold with heels, and alight upon feet.

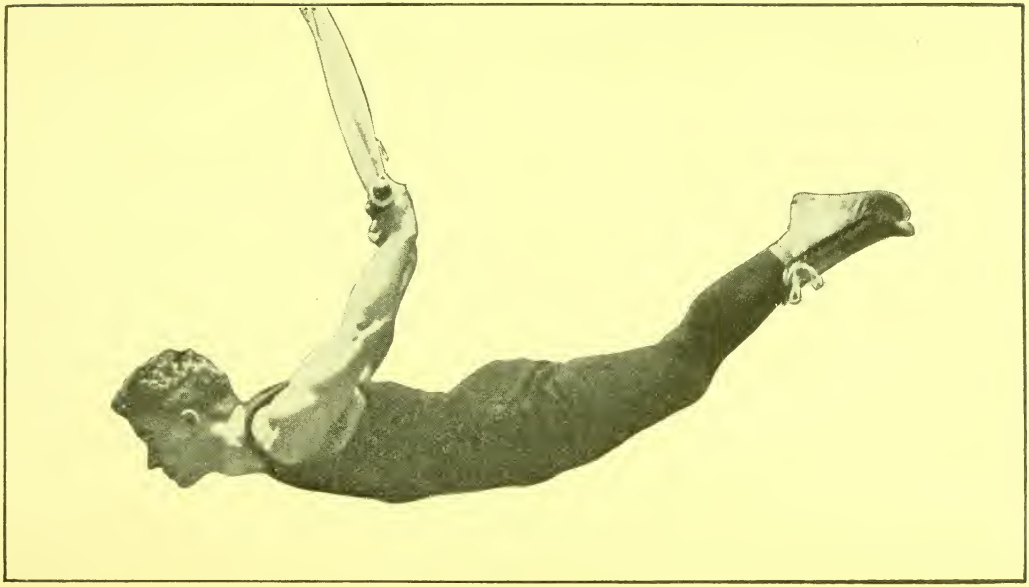


FIGURE 13.

FIGURE 13.

Back Lever.

The swinging back lever is very graceful and hard to hold at the proper angle (Figure 13).

Practice the back lever with the trapeze stationary before attempting it in the swing.

Keep the hands close together, as this gives the arms a tight hold upon the shoulder-blades.

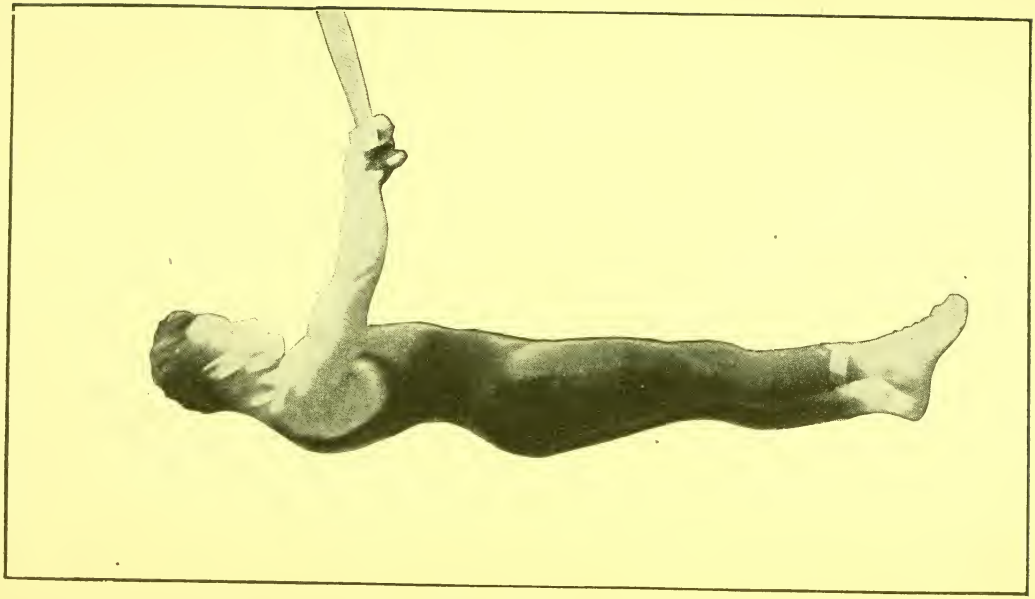


FIGURE 14.

FIGURE 14.

Swinging Front Lever.

The swinging front lever is the most difficult lever performed upon the trapeze, except it might be the one-armed back lever swinging (Figure 13). Practice the front lever stationary before attempting the swing.

The various levers performed upon the horizontal bar can also be done upon the trapeze.

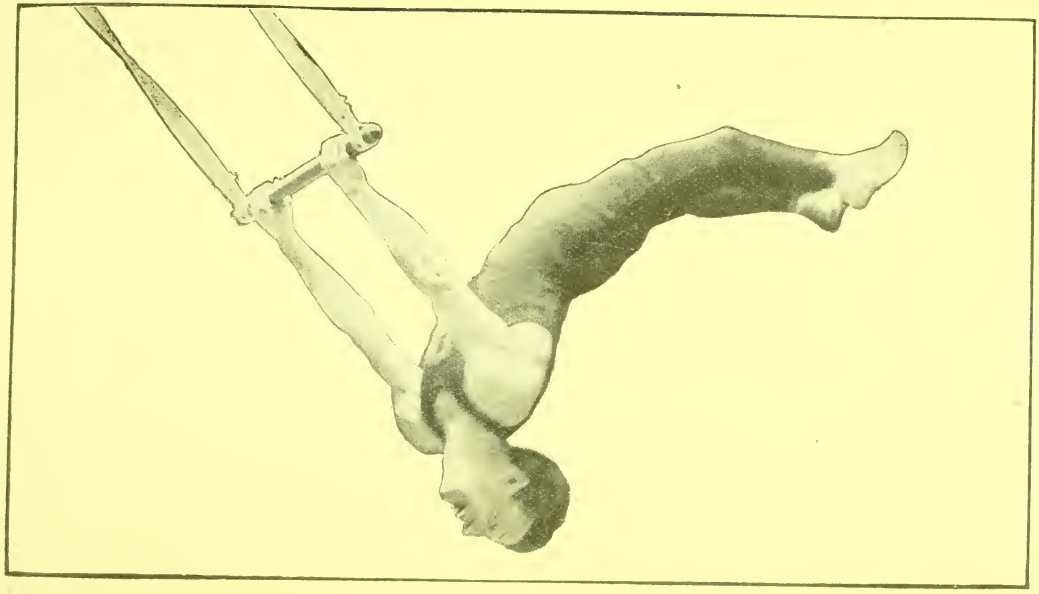


FIGURE 15.

Figure 15.

Back Flyaway.

The various flyaways make a neat form of dismounting, are popular with the spectator, but are dangerous in learning, unless proper assistance is secured.

It does not require a very high swing in the flyaway. Swing as in Figure 15 and, when this position is reached, release grasp and turn a backward somersault to the mat. Do not turn over too far before releasing the grasp, as one's feet are likely to strike the bar of the trapeze and result in an ugly fall.

Practice the turn as in figure a number of times before letting go, and wear lungers in the first few attempts.

The back flyaway can also be performed at the end of the backward swing.

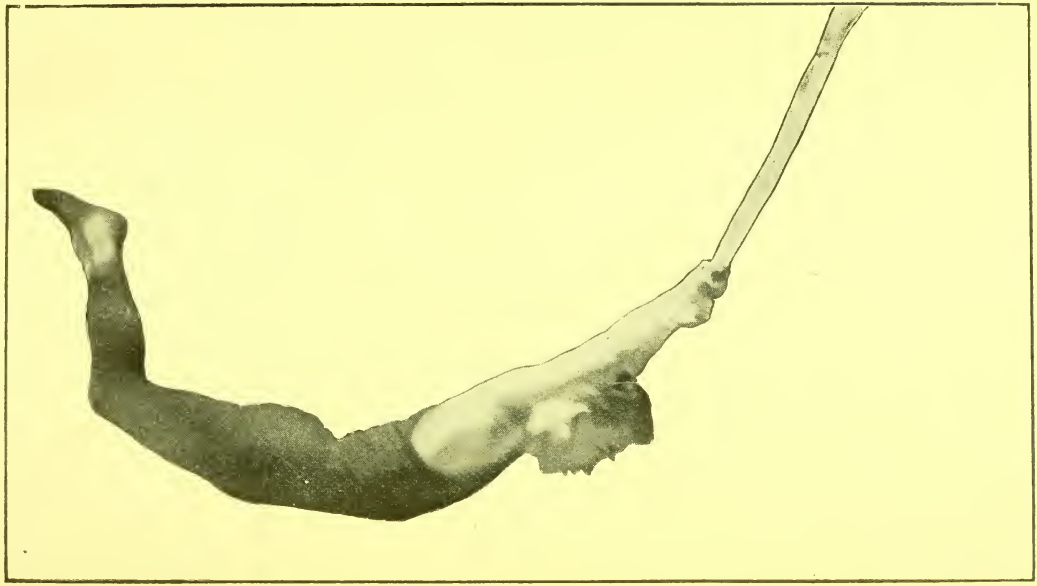


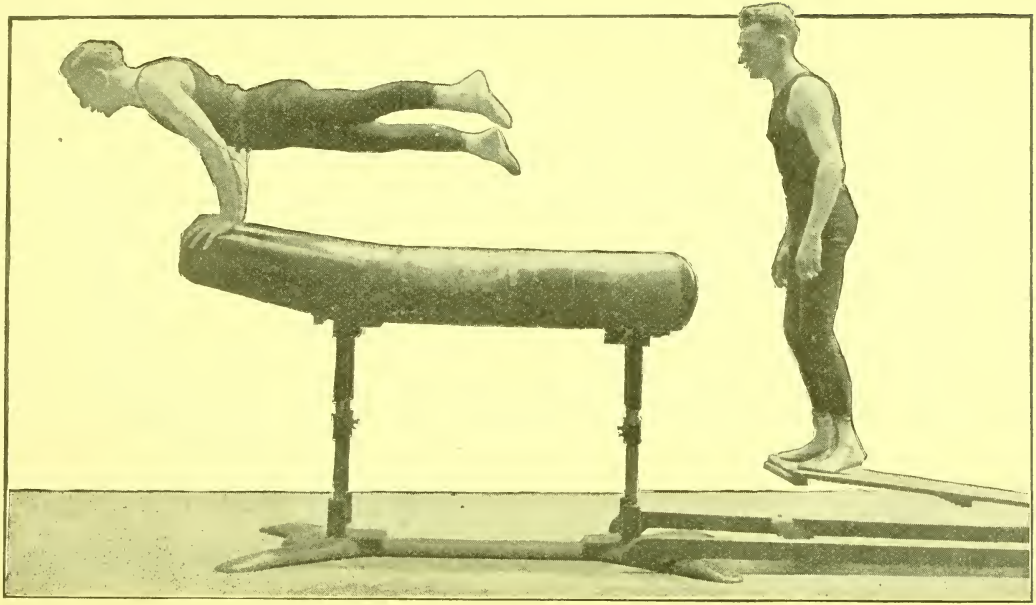
FIGURE 16.

FIGURE 16.

Forward Flyaway.

When in the position of Figure 16 release grasp, double up, try to grasp the insteps, and turn a front somersault to mat. For flyaways, ropes of about eight or ten feet in length are the best.

The forward flyaway at the end of the forward swing is a very difficult piece of work, as is the backward back, because, unlike the rings, the bar is in one's way, but perseverance will master any and all of these. "Make haste slowly" in all exercises involving risk. Secure assistance. Wear lungers in the various flyaways and all other exercises involving danger.



Position 2. Position 1.

FIGURE 1.

Exercises on the Long Horse

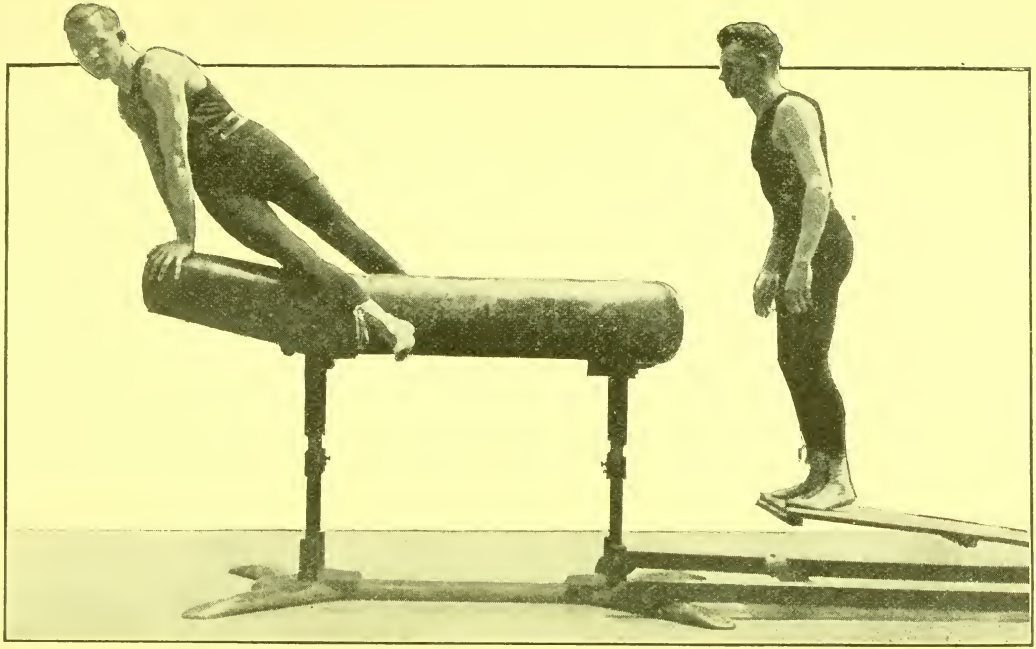
FIGURE 1.

Straddle Forward.

There are a great many exercises that can be performed on the long horse, such as vaults (front, rear, scissors and screw), with the various turns, that it would require a book to treat properly. The following illustrations will give a faint conception of what can be accomplished on the long horse.

Run and jump from spring board (Position 1) to Position 2 (legs apart), and straddle off forwards to mat.

Various turns after the straddle, such as the quarter, half, right and left, can be added. The backward straddle with the turn can also be performed.



Position 2. Position 1.

FIGURE 2.

FIGURE 2.

Scissors Backward.

Run and jump from spring board (Position 1) as if about to straddle forward (Figure 1, Position 2), but instead turn as in Position 2 and scissors backward to mat.

The scissors is performed by continuing the movement of the legs in Position 2, cutting off the hands, and alighting facing the horse.

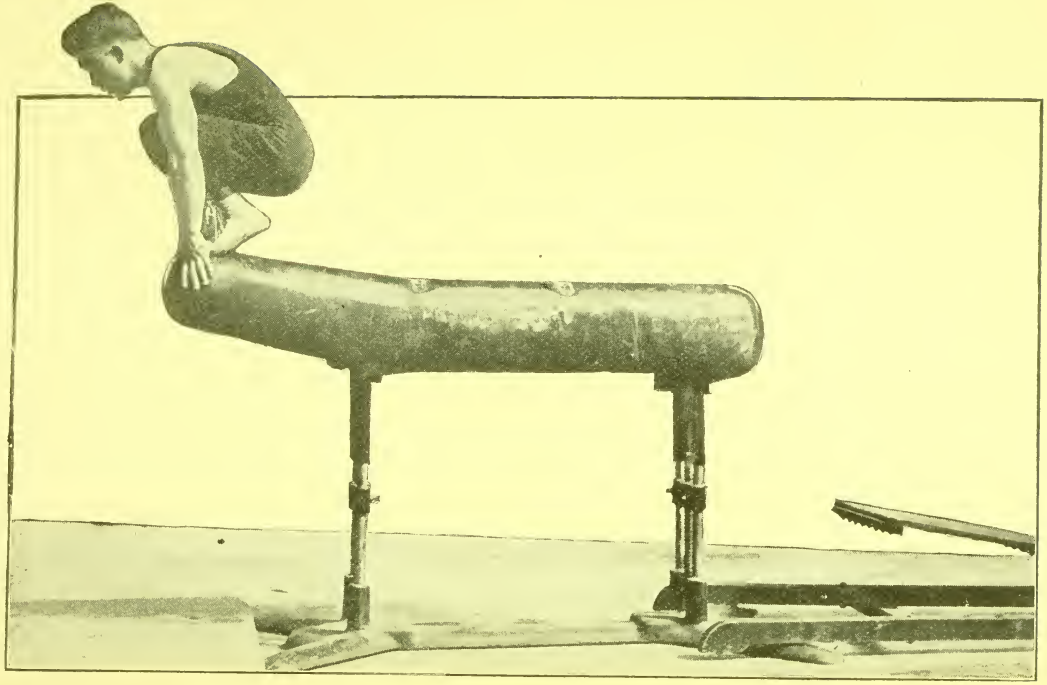


FIGURE 3.

FIGURE 3.

Squat Vault.

Run; jump from spring board and squat vault; carry feet between hands to mat.

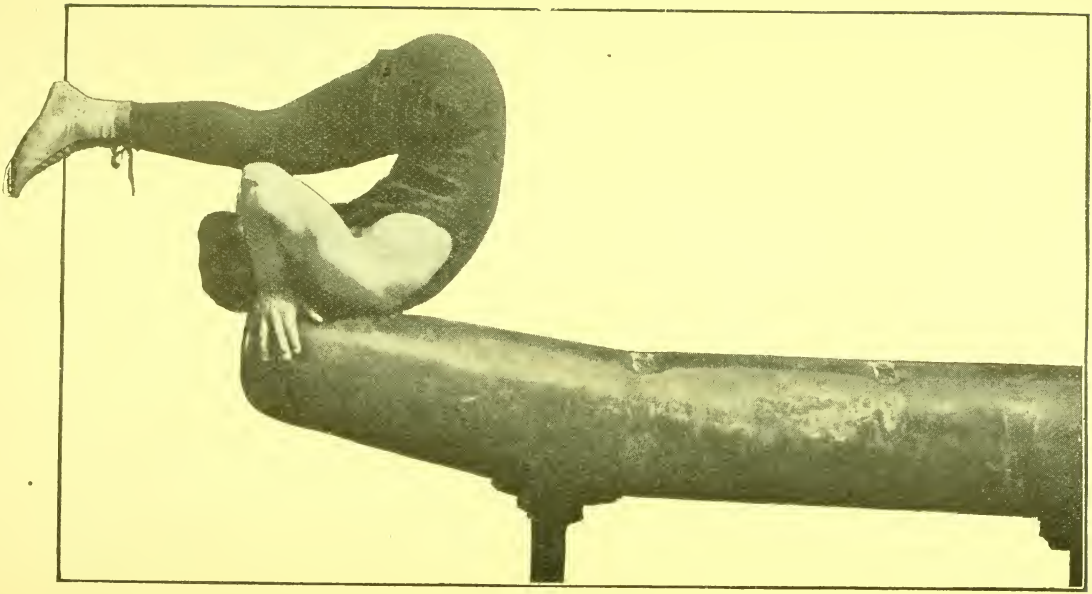


FIGURE 4.

FIGURE 4.

Roll forward as in figure to astride horse, then roll backward as in figure to mat.

Roll forward to astride horse, scissors and roll off backward.

Roll forward to straddle position, roll forward to mat.

Roll forward to straddle position, hand or head spring off as in Figure 5.

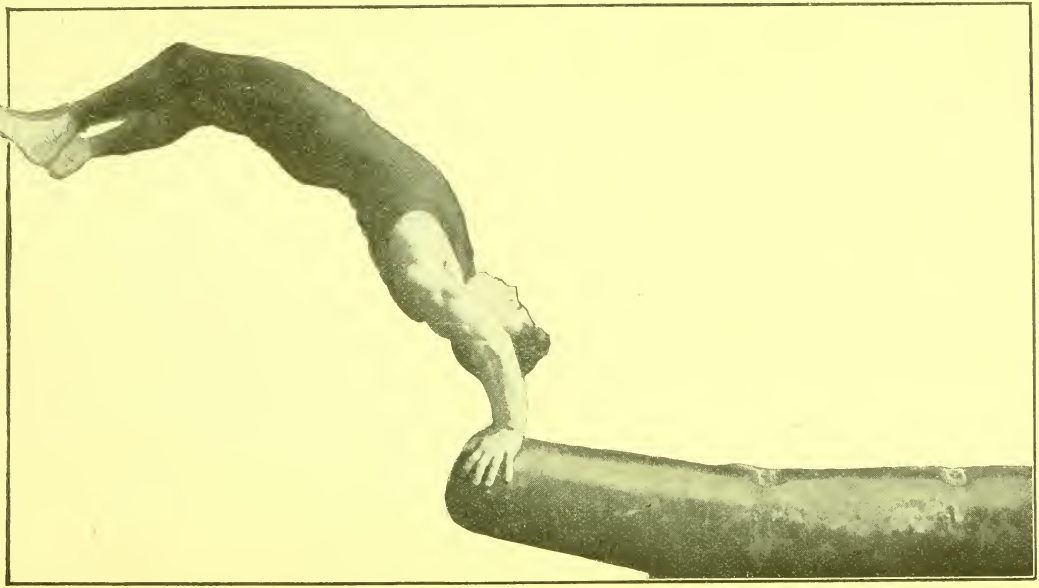


FIGURE 5.

FIGURE 5.

Run; jump from spring board to hand balance to neck of horse as in figure.

The same and dismount with squat between hands or straddle off to mat.

Jump from spring board and hand spring (Figure 5).

Many other movements will suggest themselves, such as front, rear and screw vaults, with turns and combinations.

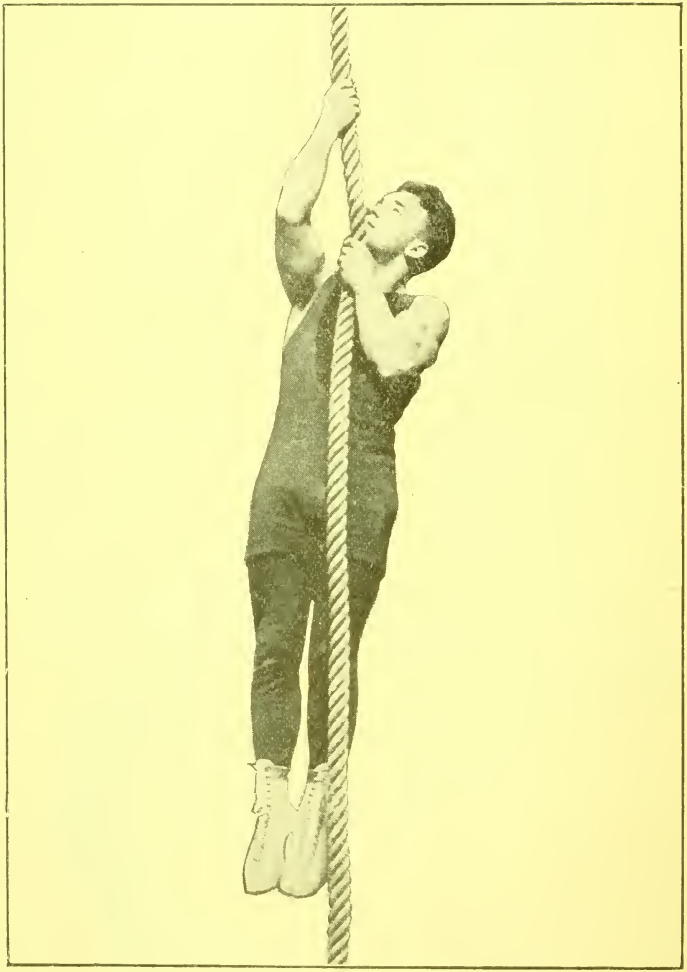


FIGURE 1.

Exercises on the Vertical Rope

The various ways of ascending and descending the vertical rope are excellent for physical development and also are very useful, because this knowledge may mean the saving of life. Everyone should be taught how to climb a rope and also to swim, in order to protect one's life in case of fire or accident or give aid to others. Rope climbing, like swimming, is a very tiresome exercise when done improperly, and the fault in both exercises is that the arms are used too much and the legs too little.

FIGURE 1.

Rope Climbing.

Hand-over-Hand.

Before attempting the hand-over-hand rope climbing one should practice the elementary forms of ascending and descending the rope, using hands, thighs and feet. In hand-over-hand climbing (Figure 1) it means hard work; one reaches up and grasps the rope one hand after the other, each time pulling in toward the chest muscles. Commence by holding with the feet. While holding the rope by pressing the soles of both feet against it, reach up and take another grasp. Repeat this till up the required height. Descend by holding with the feet the same way.

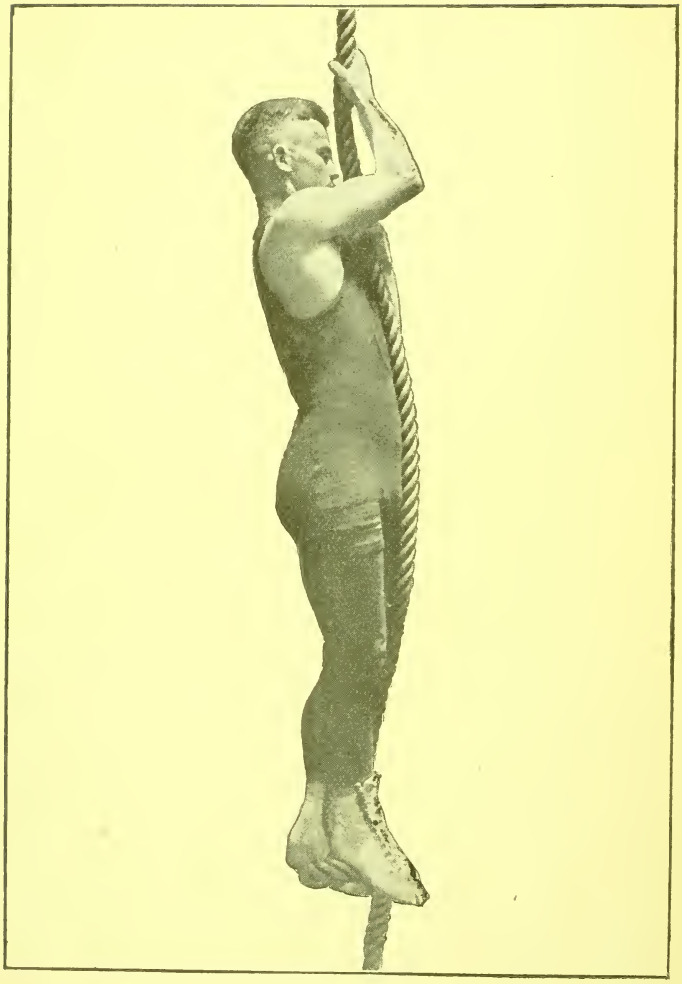


FIGURE 2.

FIGURE 2.

The Stirrup Hold.

In going up the rope hand over hand one must be careful at first and not overdo it, because there is always a return trip. Some, who have more ambition than strength, are so exhausted when the top is reached that they can barely hold on, slide down and, for their temerity, get badly torn hands and burnt fingers.

When tired stop and, with rope between thighs, place the soles of both feet against rope and press tightly. Make a stirrup lock as in Figure 2, the rope passing under the sole of the left foot and over the toes of the same, placing right foot on top, and putting weight of body on rope, thus relieving strain on the arms.

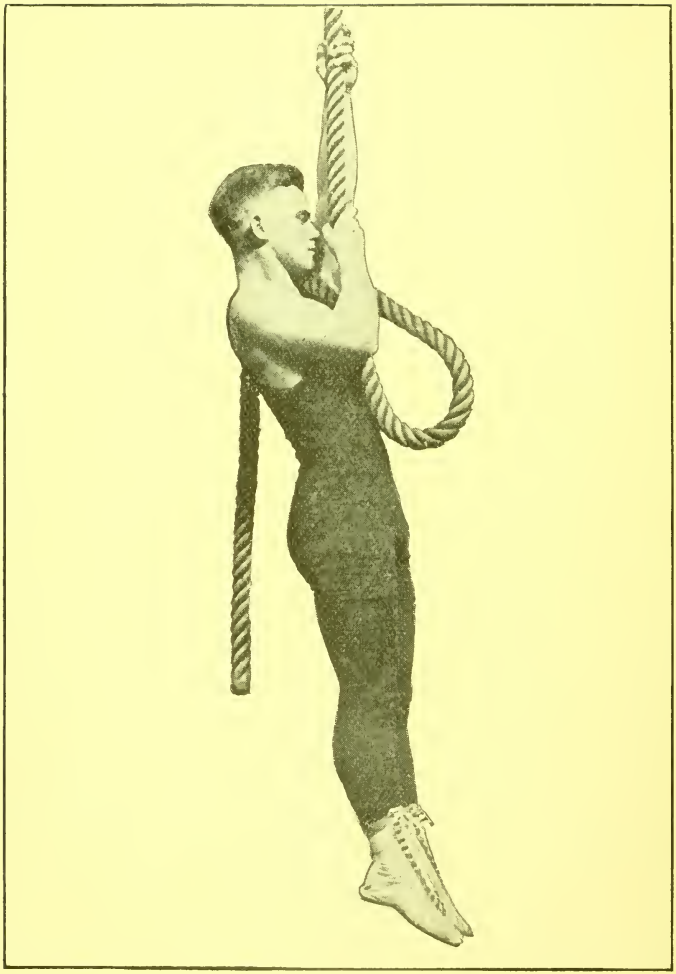


FIGURE 3.

FIGURE 3.

Taking Up Rope.

Place the rope, of sufficient length to hold, over the shoulders and go up hand over hand, taking up the rope. An excellent exercise is to ascend and descend, holding various objects, such as a large medicine ball held between the feet or in one arm, etc.

All these exercises may be performed while the rope is swinging, thus rendering them more difficult.

FIGURE 4.

FIGURE 4.

Sitting On Rope.

From Figure 3, when enough loop is lowered, put leg through and sit as in Figure 4, holding rope between chin and shoulder.

There are various gymnastic climbing appliances, such as the vertical and incline pole, two poles side by side, about width of shoulders, turning incline pole, incline rope, knotted rope, rope ladder, etc., and all are very good, but the vertical rope used in these exercises is the best.

The cotton rope is better than the hemp, as one can get a better grip upon it and it does not splinter the hands.

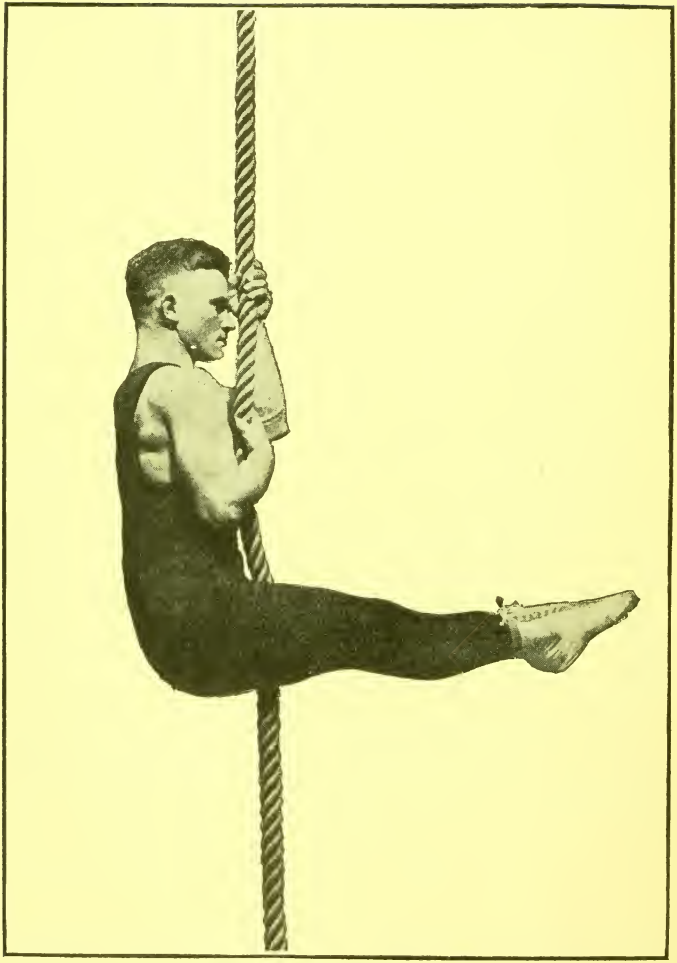


FIGURE 5.

FIGURE 5.

Hand Over Hand, Thighs Flexed.

This is a rather difficult way of ascending the rope. Go up hand over hand, thighs flexed, legs straight and toes pointed.

It is a good exercise for the abdominal muscles as well as the muscles of the upper part of the body.

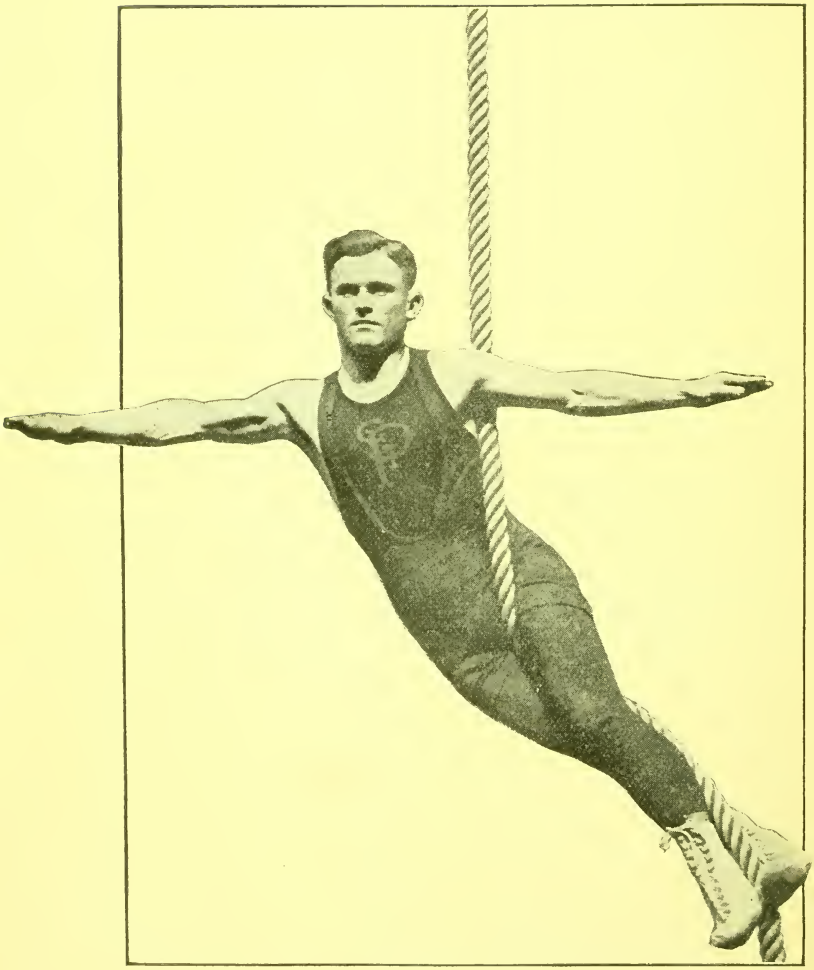


FIGURE 6.

FIGURE 6.

Descending Without Use of Hands.

Descending the rope in this fashion enables one to rest the arms and is more difficult than it appears. Entwine the rope behind the left arm, around left leg, and hold it in position with the right foot. The feet regulate the speed of descent. It is easier if some one holds the lower end of the rope or a weight is attached

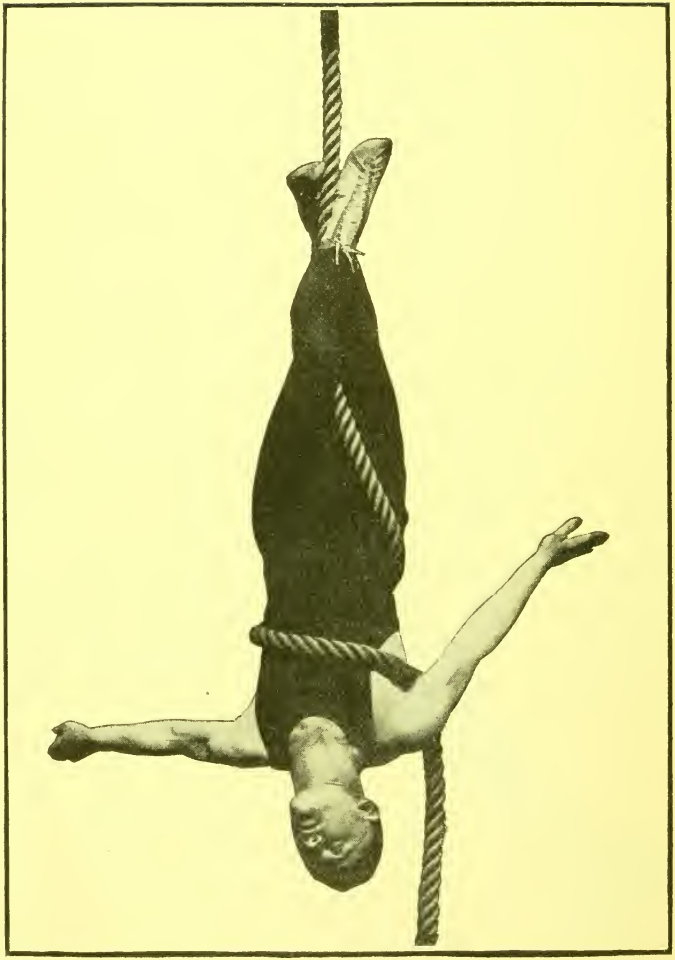
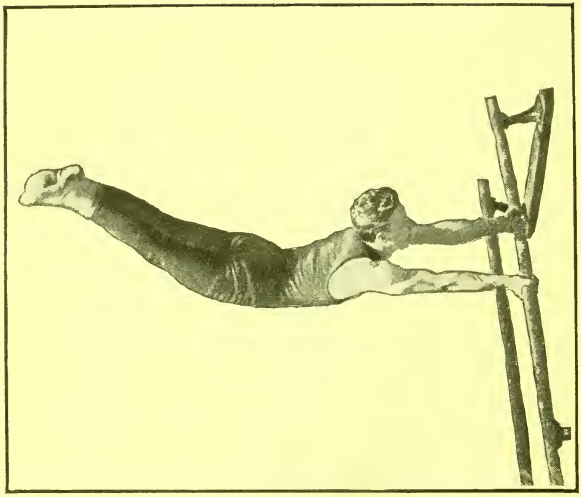


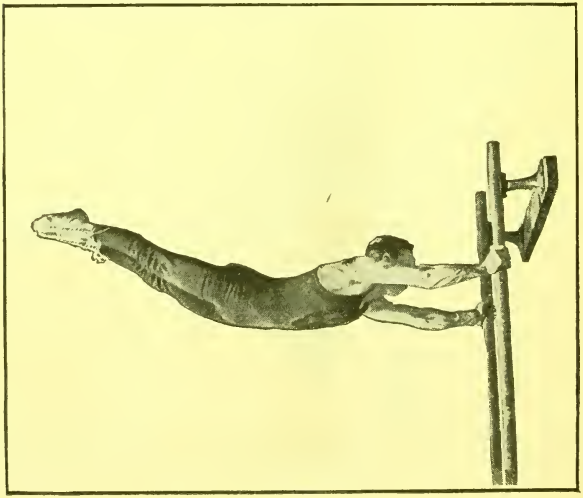
FIGURE 7.

Figure 7.

Descending Head First.

Descending head foremost without the use of the hands is not a very difficult feat, still it looks a very daring and dangerous act. Circle backward from Figure 5 to an inverted hang (see Figure 7), passing the rope from the left side under the right arm, across the body, around right leg, and over right instep, holding it with the left foot. The left foot regulates the descent. It is easier if some one holds the lower end of the rope or a weight is attached.





In every gymnasium wherein advanced work is done upon the horizontal, high parallels, rings and trapeze, a pair of low parallel bars should be accessible, in order that the aspiring gymnast may practice the hand balance, changing from one grasp to another, and the pirouette. There is no danger from falling at this height and it also accustoms one to the inverted position of the body.

Caution.—In all exercises involving risk, seek assistance.

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